

**District of Columbia
Rehabilitation Services Administration
FY 2007 State Plan for
Title I and Title VI-B Supplement**

**Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council
Response of the Designated State Unit, and Explanations for Rejection of Input and
Recommendations**

Recommendation:

Individuals who are seeking supported employment services through MRDDA, using Medicaid waiver funds, are being more routinely routed to RSA so a determination can be made regarding their eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds and services, as appropriate. Every effort should be made to ensure that undue delays do not occur in this process creating barriers to the initiation of services and the smooth transition from one funding stream to another.

Response:

RSA, in coordination with MRDDA and the Department of Mental Health staff, is working through an interagency committee structure to ensure services are provided on a timely basis.

Recommendation:

RSA is to be commended for executing contracts with four (4) agencies through a competitive bidding process for SE services. It would still be preferable and less burdensome if DC/RSA was able to achieve a qualified provider process in lieu of issuing contracts for this service. This is commonly done in other states. It serves to expand the pool of providers and further increases consumer choice.

Response:

RSA is required to provide services within the framework of the District of Columbia's procurement system.

Recommendation:

Data should be collected, if it is not already occurring, that gives some indication of how many people with disabilities are being served in the One-Stops by One-Stop personnel versus RSA counselors. A great deal of training has occurred with the One –Stop

personnel regarding services to people with disabilities. It would seem prudent to make some kind of determination of whether the training has been effective. It would also be helpful to know how many people are getting referred to RSA via the One-Stops and whether these referrals could have been handled by One-Stop personnel or whether some additional training or technical support is needed.

Response:

RSA will confer with the management of the One-Stop Center to determine if data collection requested above can be obtained on a regular basis.

Recommendation:

The DC/RSA and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) employability project should be actively marketed to offenders with disabilities. All efforts should be made to identify offenders who are disabled and to assist them to become eligible for and receive applicable services.

Response:

RSA currently has a Memorandum of Agreement with CSOSA.

Recommendation:

Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with DCPS partners. Maintain active involvement of DCPS representation on SRC. Maintain DC/RSA representation on DCPS transition councils, committees and task forces. The Council has identified poor educational and vocational training coupled with inadequate transition services as two key elements contributing to unemployment and underemployment in the District and the high number of individuals seeking services through DC/RSA.

Response:

Staff in the RSA's Transition Unit are continuing to work closely with the DCPS staff to improve services to the youth.

Recommendation:

Continue to develop the Office of Youth Transition. Use recently acquired local funding to quickly staff the units with additional counselors. Ensure that counselors are properly trained to provide support to transition services and work closely with DCPS personnel.

Response:

RSA will work closely with the DC Office of Personnel (DCOP) to ensure hiring of the staff when the FY 2007 funds become available.

Recommendation:

RSA and the SRC should continue to advocate for vocational programs for all DCPS students who would benefit from them and for the inclusion of students with disabilities in those programs, with proper support.

Response:

RSA will work closely with SRC to develop ideas and strategies for full inclusion of students with disabilities.

Recommendation:

The SRC seeks to be more effective in supporting the Agency in the implementation of the State Plan. To this end the SRC is developing a three year plan to guide its activities. The SRC needs support from the agency in the form of an annual calendar of key events and due dates for reports. The agency should provide such a calendar to the SRC by the beginning of the '07 fiscal year.

Response:

RSA is very willing to provide the SRC with a calendar of FY 2007 activities to the extent that the information is known.

Recommendation:

Develop more detailed annual projections of growth of caseloads and corresponding need for additional counselors based on both growth and attrition. Ensure that recruitment activities allow for the desired counselor/client ratio of 1 to 125 to be achieved within one to two years. .

Response:

This is a goal for RSA and is included in the state plan.

Recommendation:

Ensure that in-service training for counselors and other key personnel addresses interagency collaboration and cooperation in the provision of all services but especially Supported Employment. Counselors must be trained on the Medicaid waiver since many individuals receiving SE services will transition from VR to Medicaid wavier services.

Response:

RSA recognizes the need for additional training on Medicaid waiver services and will seek to identify training sources for this topic.

Recommendation:

Ensure that in-service training addresses cultural issues, particularly those which may represent barriers to work. Outreach programs should be developed with an awareness of the stigma that some cultures have toward disability as well as toward seeking assistance for those family members who may be disabled.

Response:

Cultural diversity training is an ongoing project for RSA.

Recommendation:

Outreach programs, especially those directed at unrepresented groups such as males, should include materials and enticements which are population specific and which provide immediate results or gratification to the individuals being targeted.

Response:

Further discussion with SRC is needed for this recommendation.

Recommendation:

Share demographic data regarding the numbers of people with disabilities in DC who may be potential customers, people with significant disabilities and the anticipated rehabilitation needs of those individuals, per ward, with SRC.

Response:

RSA does project the number of individuals who may be potential clients and this information is included in the state plan.

Recommendation:

In order to promote normalization and to prudently use VR funds, ensure that maximum numbers of people possible are serviced through One-Stops. Ensure that information regarding the availability of VR services is available and accessible at all One-Stops.

Response:

RSA will work closely with the One-Stop managers in an effort to improve the partnership and result in increased services at the One-Stops.

Recommendation:

Use peer to peer training in the orientation process for people entering the VR system to better engage trainees in the process. Encourage the use of males in order to attract and maintain the participation of males.

Response:

This recommendation will be discussed with RSA management who are responsible for the orientation process.

Recommendation:

Include additional topics in the training provided to customers by the Office of Marketing and Business Services Programs. Since failures at work often are caused by issues not related to work performance but rather to work related behavior, offer training to include problem solving, social behavior at work, work-home separation (not bringing home problems to work), acquisition of child care and other ancillary services and work-home balance.

Response:

RSA management will take this recommendation under consideration to determine whether this can be done in-house or referred to another DC agency.

Recommendation:

Add cable TV to the list of mass media outreach list.

Response:

RSA will explore the cost of this recommendation.

Recommendation:

Ensure that data from the IRI survey, which will address the reasons why people with disabilities are not utilizing the One-Stops to assist them in finding employment, is shared with the SRC and other pertinent stakeholders. Be an active partner in the grant to ensure full coordination and collaboration between the One-Stops and DCRSA.

Response:

RSA will share a copy of the report with the SRC.

Recommendation:

Publish policies and regulations governing the provision of DCRSA services. Publish information regarding the nature, scope and criteria for each service that is provided. Clients have a right to such information and they provide guidance regarding fairness of agency's decision regarding delivery of service.

Response:

RSA has submitted the draft regulations through regular channels for review and publishing. The final rules are expected in FY 2007.

Recommendation:

Assure timely delivery of service. Eliminate or minimize the time between orientation of new customers and the development of IPEs. Create and publish regulations with specific, enforceable timeframes for the development of the IPE to replace the current goal of 60 days after eligibility is determined.

Response:

The IPE timeframes have changed to 90 days after eligibility, which is realistic.

Recommendation:

Conduct timely transition planning. Create IPEs in advance of graduation and ensure that students graduating from high school do not sit without services for extended periods during which they risk skill loss and disillusionment.

Response:

This recommendation can only be accomplished with the hiring of additional staff which is ongoing for RSA.

Recommendation:

Ensure timely and smooth implementation of IPEs. Avoid delays or gaps in implementation or gaps of the IPE due to bureaucratic barriers. Take pro-active steps to ensure that the flow of funds for on-going services, such as tuition, purchase of needed supplies, travel funds, etc. is such that gaps in service which can be anticipated and avoided do not occur.

Response:

It is anticipated that the new regulations will enable the administration to ensure that funds are available for ongoing services.

Recommendation:

Avoid delays in implementation of services caused by disputes between agencies regarding which agency is responsible for payment of services. Require counselors to take an active role in resolving disputes regarding this matter. Ensure that funds are provided during such disputes so that the rehabilitation process is not unduly delayed or termed.

Response:

This recommendation requires further clarification from SRC members.

Recommendation:

Share rationale for development of income criteria for services with stakeholders. Ensure that procedure for applying criteria is adequately documented in regulations and other guidance provided to counselors and applicants. Ensure consistency in application of guidelines. Study impact of the implementation of the guidelines and review efficacy of continued use of guidelines.

Response:

The income criteria is documented in the draft regulations and training and guidance will be provided to the counselors.

Recommendation:

Complete the revision of the Memorandum of Understanding between RSA, DCPS and other government agencies which will strengthen and expand the process, activities and productive outcomes from the Transition Program.

Response:

The revised MOU has been done and is in process of being signed by various agency heads.

Recommendation:

Design, install and utilize the state-of-the-art computer/technology system for the agency. Special emphasis should be placed on Client Services and the work of the counselors. The System should respond to compatibility, language diversity, and assistive functions for counselors with varying disabilities to be able to use it.

Response:

This recommendation will be explored with the D.C. Government's Office of Chief Technology.

Recommendation:

Continue the excellent work on the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; and continuation of the aggressive recruitment of counselors and other related personnel.

Response:

RSA is continuing its efforts to hire additional counselors.

Recommendation:

Expand and intensify the “Supported Self Employment Program” as a meaningful employment outcome.

Response:

This effort is being researched by RSA’s management.

Recommendation:

Expand the Community Education and Information Program to develop greater awareness of the VR program and the work of RSA. Emphasize the work through the public media and the Internet.

Response:

RSA will discuss this recommendation with DHS’ Public Information Officer.

Recommendation:

Work with the District of Columbia State Rehabilitation Council on activities which will increase the awareness and understanding of business, industries and other public agencies of the VR program and its role in employment for persons with disabilities. The end result should be increased employment opportunity.

Response:

RSA will work with the SRC to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the District of Columbia.

Procedures and Activities Regarding the Establishment and Maintenance of a Comprehensive System of Personal Development

I. System for Determining the Number and Types of Service Delivery Staff

The District of Columbia Rehabilitation Services Administration (DC/RSA) determines the number and types of service delivery personnel that are needed by examining the following factors: number of persons to be served based on experience and census data, attrition rate over the last five years, age and time-in service of staff presently on board, and anticipated budget. The projections are made for five years and are re-examined annually.

Using the system described, DC/RSA has projected that the numbers of persons served per year will increase significantly over the next two (2) to four (4) years because of the new welfare reform requirements.

The present average customer/counselor ratio is 170 to 1. The goal is to achieve a ration of 125 to 1 when additional counselors are hired.

DC/RSA has determined that it will be necessary to hire an average of eleven counselors per year, four (4) placement specialists, and four (4) supervisors in 2005-2009. It is not unrealistic to assume that maintaining contact with rehabilitation training programs can result in recruitment and hiring of more direct service providers in five years. While projections are for a four (4) year period, staff will be recruited as vacancies occur.

II. System for Utilizing Institutions of Higher Education

A working relationship has been established with the rehabilitation counseling program coordinators in local universities in order to determine the number of students enrolled in the programs and the number of potential graduates.

The District of Columbia utilizes the George Washington University (GWU) and the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to assist in training rehabilitation professionals. The relationship has yielded graduates and on-going training and staff development for existing DC/RSA staff. The DC/RSA is an internship site for the GWU, UDC, University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Coppin State College. On occasion, the internship resulted in employment as a Rehabilitation Counselor by the agency.

III. Education Status of Rehabilitation Counselors

Current No. of Counselors Employed – 27

Current No. of Counselors with no BS/BA Degree – 0

Current No. of Counselors with BS/BA Degree – 0

Current No. of Counselors with Masters Degree – 27

Current No. of Counselors who are expected to retire within
the next four (4) years – 8

There are four (4) counselors who are working to complete the category D.4 for eighteen credit hours of course work required by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) for specific core courses.

Methods to Meet Compliance:

1. Effective October 1, 2003, all new counselors hired were required to have a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or related field.
2. Promotions have been obtained for qualified personnel which is an incentive to remain in the rehabilitation profession.
3. Effective immediately, all counselors with a Masters Degree and completion of category D.4 by November 15, 2006 will be encouraged to become a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor through agency funding.
4. Effective immediately, all counselors with a Masters Degree will be encouraged to apply under categories D.1, D.2, or D.3 as outlined by the CRCC to become a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor through agency funding.

The four (4) universities in the greater Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area and Baltimore, Maryland, that offer a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling are:

The George Washington University
The University of Maryland
Coppin State University
The University of the District of Columbia

DC/RSA will sponsor rehabilitation counseling staff at any university listed above for additional casework, when applicable to certification, by paying the tuition for those unable to obtain grant funding. Staff will be expected to attend classes during non-work hours and weekends so that the wide array of vocational rehabilitation services will continue and job demands will not be affected.

IV. Standards Ensuring the Availability of Persons to Communicate in Mode of Communication of the Customer

DC/RSA service population includes Latinos, Chinese and Vietnamese. Counseling staff have bilingual capability in Spanish and Chinese. Other staff have bilingual capability.

Staff who Speak Spanish

1 Manager
1 Rehabilitation Counselor
2 Rehabilitation Assistant

Staff Who Speak Chinese

1 Manager
1 Staff Assistant

Staff Fluent in American Sign Language

1 Manager
4 Rehabilitation Specialists

Our service brochures have been translated into Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese, Simplified Korean and Amharic.

Translation Services

We have relied primarily on the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Americas for interpreter services on an as needed basis. We have also been granted access to the "Language Line," a telephone translation service that provides immediate access to translation services in a variety of languages.

We also provide interpreter services for our hearing impaired or deaf customers. Several of our staff are fluent in American Sign Language. We also have a full time sign language interpreter on staff.

V. Staff Development Activities that Ensure Appropriate and Adequate Training

DC/RSA continues to promote education/training opportunities to ensure that current employees become qualified and maintain qualifications:

A training needs assessment is conducted by DC/RSA's training specialist, a supervisor's recommendations are considered for individual and group training needs and staff may also submit personal training requests. All training activities are arranged and coordinated by the Administration's Training Specialist with emphasis placed on the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements. In addition to a traditional university/college curriculum, staff will be encouraged to apply to the CSPD Masters Degree Program in Rehabilitation Counseling Distance Education Program, through the George Washington University which is designed to meet the CSPD requirements.

DC/RSA will continue to ensure that qualified staff provides appropriate services to its customers by requiring all staff to complete in-service training courses each year in areas designated as essential for skills upgrading.

DC/RSA has conducted and will continue to conduct joint training with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) staff and DC/RSA staff on transition services required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act. In addition, the Chief of the Office of Youth and Transition conducts outreach and information forums in DCPS and Charter Schools for students, parents, guardians and professional staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the services of the DC/RSA transition from school to work program.

**Rehabilitation Services Administration
Personnel Forecast Clients to be Served**

FY-2007

Clients to be served	11,200				
Staff					
Counselor (FTE)	45				
Evaluators	1				
Placement Specialists	8				
Psychologists	8				
Supervisory Staff	23				
Administrative (including Secretarial & Clerical Staff)	30				
Administrator	1				
Support Service Staff	24				
Interpreter	1				
Educational Coordinator	1				
Quality Assurance Specialist	3				
Public Relations Specialist	1				
Social Security Specialist	1				
Training Development Staff	3				
Medical Staff	4				

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Cost of Services

The District of Columbia labor force data indicates that 271,500 residents are of work age. Of those that are of work age, 17,500 are unemployed and approximately 12,000 of these individuals have disabilities and are eligible to apply for vocational rehabilitation services. DC/RSA serves all persons who request services. At present, the total caseload is over 10,000. The number has increased over the last several years because our office is more centrally located, more clients are applying for services, and the funding streams for other programs are drying up. We anticipate a future increase because our clients are living longer and they acquire disabilities, our outreach to persons with the most significant disabilities has increased, and we have increased our outreach service to persons from minority populations.

October 1, 2006 – September 30, 2007
Title I, Part B

Individuals to be Served		11,200
Cost of Services	Federal	\$11,500,000
	Appropriated	<u>6,603,000</u>
	Total	\$18,103,000

Title VI, Part B

Individuals to be Served		185
Cost of Services	Federal	\$300,000

Total estimated costs of vocational rehabilitation services and supported employment services are \$11,800,000 in federal dollars and a local match of \$6,603,000.

Attachment 4.12 (b)
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Effective Date: October 1, 2006

State's Goals and Plans Regarding Distribution of Funds Received Under Title VI, Part B of the Act

The District of Columbia Rehabilitation Services Administration's (DC/RSA) Supported Employment Program utilizes an evidenced-based approach to assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities find and keep competitive employment in settings that pay at least minimum wage with benefits. DC/RSA has determined that the persons in greatest need of supported employment are persons with severe and persistent mental illness and persons with mental retardation. Supported employment services are individualized and include but are not limited to:

- Counseling and guidance;
- Job coaching (on-the-job training);
- Rapid job search and placement;
- Short-term training;
- Follow along (unlimited supports); and
- Development of natural supports.

DC/RSA has established partnerships with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities Administration (MRDDA) to provide job development, job placement, job coaching and follow-along services. These partnerships have assisted RSA in expanding its provider pool so that clients needing supported employment can select from community-based providers with expertise in the fields of mental health and developmental disabilities. DC/RSA and MRDDA established a Human Care Agreement process which yielded three (3) additional service providers, totaling four (4), to serve clients with mental retardation. The four (4) providers are the ARC of the District of Columbia, St. Johns Center, National Children's Center and the Kennedy Institute. There are six (6) providers serving clients with mental illness. They include Community Connections, Anchor Mental Health, Psychiatric Charter Care, Community Services Agency, Green Door and Deaf Reach.

Long term follow-along services are provided by MRDDA and DMH. MRDDA administers a MRDDA Waiver which includes long term supports for consumers with developmental disabilities in supported employment who receive Medicaid.

Continued efforts to improve supported employment services to clients include the following:

- Continued participation in Johnson and Johnson /DMH Supported Employment Evidenced Based Practice Project;
- Streamlined the Intake and eligibility process;
- Revised referral process;
- Continued development and implementation of staff training;
- Developed information materials (brochure and fact sheet);
- Developed and implemented protocol for interagency meetings; and
- Implemented monthly meeting with:
Providers to monitor client progress in job development and job placement;
Program Managers/Directors regarding policies, procedures and finances; and
Employment Specialist and RSA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for
information and resource sharing.

Referrals for DC/RSA supported employment services have increased 100% (112) from last year.

RSA will maintain its partnerships and continue to strive for better employment outcomes for persons with significant disabilities.

Funds received under Section 622 of the Act, is to be used as follows:

- \$100,000 – Persons with severe and persistent mental illness
- \$200,000 – Persons with mental retardation

Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities And Use of Title I Funds for Innovative and Expansion Activities

DC/RSA's Client Services Division (CSD) began the training module on January 20, 2006. The objective of this training is to provide our newer counseling staff with training in the fundamentals of the vocational rehabilitation program. The training is held weekly and is ongoing until management staff is assured, through scheduled and unscheduled case reviews, that the rehabilitation counselor's documentation meets the established standards and is in compliance with federal and District regulations. These sessions are evaluated by the staff attending and the results are submitted to the agency training coordinator for planning future training. The ultimate goal of this training initiative is to maintain compliance with federal and District regulations, policies and guidelines.

In an effort to minimize cost, management and staff from the agency are conducting the in-service training. We have also utilized other entities of the District of Columbia, including the Regional Rehabilitation Counseling Education Program at the George Washington University to provide training on case management. In addition, we have had presenters from the National Rehabilitation Hospital who conducted a session on their programs/services on vocational evaluation, assistive technology and rehabilitation engineering. Several government agencies presented the best approaches to serving clients with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Lead presenters of these disciplines were from the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration and from the Department of Mental Health.

The topics presented to date include: the legislation that governs our program, program instructions that outline the procedures for staff in performing their duties, the Mayor's Standards for Good Customer Services, case management concerns such as determining when, why and how a request for a medical assessment should be processed, providing the client with procedures and information to better comply with the requirements of informed choice, process for requesting existing assessments from hospital(s) and treating physician(s) and utilizing comparable benefits. The importance of case documentation for all contacts has been discussed and emphasis placed on immediately entering the data into our Client Rehabilitation Information System (CRIS).

The importance of eligibility, functional limitations and impediments to employment documentation have been and will continue to be re-enforced at all levels in CSD. When this topic was presented, the presenter used short movies and other audio visual information to ensure that staff understood the significance of this phase of the

vocational rehabilitation process. Other sessions including, the vocational appraisal, determining vocational service needs, developing the individualized plan for employment and the significance of ensuring that after case transfers the receiving staff would be able to get a clear understanding of the status of the case.

DC/RSA will continue to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the training and offer additional training when necessary to ensure that appropriate and timely services are provided to persons with disabilities in the District of Columbia. The ultimate goal of this training initiative is to be in compliance with our federal and District regulations, policies and guidelines.

In addition to the training, managers from CSD and the Office of Quality Assurance and Federal Compliance (OQAF) have formed work groups to review the entire vocational rehabilitation process. The eligibility process has been revised to include additional documentation, review and approval of the certification of eligibility by the unit supervisor. The elimination of and reduction of errors noted in the case reviews will result in case documentation compliance and accuracy.

DC/RSA is aggressively recruiting qualified personnel for the position of vocational rehabilitation specialists in order to reduce the client ratio per counselor. Three (3) new counselors were hired and began work on May 15, 2006. The Administration is still actively recruiting to fill the remaining vacancies.

DC/RSA is strengthening its relationship with the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). A new program, Counseling and Career Development Center, was initiated in February 2006 in the Division of Student Affairs. The Division of Student Affairs earmarked the funds received to enhance services to persons with disabilities who attend UDC. Additional staff was hired to assist persons with disabilities in navigating the systems leading to a degree. The center will assist DC/RSA by ensuring that the accommodations and support services that are in place will facilitate a smooth transition for DC/RSA clients. UDC has vocational rehabilitation specialists who are aware of the Administration's practices and procedures.

DC/RSA continues to improve and strengthen our partnership at the One Stop Centers. A formalized process has been developed to ensure accessibility for vocational rehabilitation services and Department of Employment Services (DOES) leading to successful employment outcomes for our respective clients. A protocol for accessing vocational rehabilitation services will be implemented to improve the delivery services to all individuals served at the One Stop Centers. This protocol

will allow DC/RSA to enhance and strengthen our mandated partnership and improve the delivery of services to our respective clients. DC/RSA and the DOES will share valuable information about service availability. The participating agencies will be aware of the training and/or employment services provided throughout the client's participation in either program.

DC/RSA continues to ensure that we adhere to the District of Columbia's Language Access Law. We continue to ensure that our services are accessible for all clients whose primary language is not English. The orientation sessions for the Latino and deaf and hard of hearing clients are still provided on a regular basis. In addition, mandatory cultural training continues to be provided to DC/RSA's staff on an annual basis.

Outreach activities to improve public relations and awareness of the vocational rehabilitation program have continued at DC/RSA. We have developed a new brochure and fact sheet for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In addition, the Visual Impairment Unit and the Supported Employment Program developed brochures about their specific program areas. Our staff continues to participate in community activities, job fairs, and community outreach program.

DC/RSA continues to serve on the D.C. Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board. This board addresses communication needs of hearing and speech impaired persons in the community.

DC/RSA continues to participate in the Youth Empowerment Resource Center Project which provides youth and young adults with disabilities an opportunity to gain the skills and abilities needed to become productive members of our community.

DC/RSA continues to meet the demands of clients requiring technology while in training. The Temporary Computer Loan Program is still a cost saving method for the Administration.

DC/RSA continues to collaborate and enhance the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities who are involved in the criminal justice system. Approximately one hundred forty-one (141) referrals have been received since the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement in FY 04 with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA).

DC/RSA continues to place emphasis on the expansion of the Office of Youth and Transition Services to meet the growing population of transitioning students to ensure the successful movement of youth and young adults with disabilities from school to work and self-sufficiency. DC/RSA and the District of Columbia Public Schools (DC/PS) have established a partnership that includes other public agencies to enhance the District strategies that focus on employment after secondary education; ideas and opportunities and options that aid in guiding the student's choices in career development and outcomes; and support services available throughout the city. To ensure the successful provision of transition services, DC/RSA will:

- Continue active participation as specified in the statewide Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) relative to transition services for students. The MOA is in collaboration with the DC Public Schools, Department of Human Services, DC Housing Authority, Department of Corrections, Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Parks and Recreation.
- Participate in the revision of the MOA to meet the diverse needs of students. Revisions will include the expansion of partners, clarification and refinement of processes to increase accountability and coordination of transition services, and the improvement of statewide collection and reporting of data.
- Continue to implement the newly established Transition Protocol which outlines roles and responsibilities of Transition Unit and the Client Services Division.
- Enhance the capacity of the Client Rehabilitation Information System (CRIS) to capture, maintain, retrieve and report requisite transition data.
- Continue participation on the DC Youth investment Council (YIC) to develop system-wide policies, planning, resource allocation, performance evaluation and marketing for the creation of a seamless system for educating and preparing youth for employment.
- Continue participation on the Department of Health, Bureau of Maternal and Family Health Administration Advisory Board as mandated by Title V of the Social Security Act in order to promote better health outcomes for children and youth with special needs.

- Continue close collaboration with DCPS, Office of Special Education, for state and local initiatives, staff development training, special projects, and other city wide efforts involving transition services.
- Continue outreach efforts through participation in state and local activities including resource fairs, agency programs and conferences.
- Increase the number of staff assigned to the Youth and Transition Unit.
- Assign transition staff to local schools to implement strategies to recruit special education students and non-special education students and obtain referrals for vocational rehabilitation services.
- Provide outreach to private schools with DC students with disabilities.
- Conduct group sessions for vocational rehabilitation orientation, interviewing techniques, resume development and disability awareness.
- Provide individual sessions for technical assistance and guidance in career planning.
- Participate in the last Individual Education Program (IEP) planning meetings held in the junior year for transition students.

DC/RSA works very closely with the Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) in providing services to individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) under the Program on Work Employment and Responsibilities (POWER). These individuals have a physical and/or mental disability and require vocational rehabilitation services to achieve employment. DC/RSA receives over 350 referrals a year from IMA. In addition to serving recipients of TANF who have a mental or physical disability, IMA refers clients who are suspected of having a learning disability. Psychological evaluations are obtained to determine whether there is a learning disability (LD) present that will qualify them for the POWER program. If the individual(s) are diagnosed with LD, they attend a special DC/RSA orientation program that addresses their special needs.

DC/RSA's participation in the Social Security Administration's reimbursement for vocational rehabilitation services for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) clients who become employed at the substantial gainful employment level is a valuable source of program income for the Administration. In an effort to maximize reimbursement funds, DC/RSA will review the entire tracking process from referral to verification of benefits, cost of services and, verification of employment.

DC/RSA has met and/or exceeded the Standards and Indicators related to employment outcomes and the service rate of individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds. Standard 1.5 was not met. To meet this standard, 52% of DC/RSA's clients obtaining employment must earn over \$56,000 annually, which is the highest in the United States. The average hourly rate of DC/RSA clients is \$10.38 an hour, which is well above minimum wage. Approximately 35 percent of DC/RSA clients meet the State average earning.

DC/RSA continues to meet the needs of clients whose primary language is other than English. The Administration adheres to the District of Columbia's Language Access Line and the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act by assuring that clients can access vocational rehabilitation services. Ninety thousand District of Columbia residents ages five (5) and above, speak a language other than English. The largest population of non-English speakers are Latino with a population of 44,953 and the Asian/Pacific Islanders population of 15,189. Hence, DC/RSA has a growing population of Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients. The Administration has a strong partnership with LEP community-based organizations and businesses all who conduct outreach activities in the neighborhoods with the LEP populations.

The Client Services Division (CSD) is an important focus in efforts to address population diversity in the District of Columbia with on-site bilingual staff, translation and interpreter services. Service brochures are available translated in Spanish, Amharic (Ethiopian), Chinese (Traditional and Simplified) and Vietnamese. DC/RSA's staff assists clients throughout the rehabilitation process. Contract vendors and translators are used to provide simultaneous interpretation from English into Mandarin and Vietnamese and into other languages such as French, Portuguese and Spanish. CSD utilizes interpreter services in multiple situations and vocational rehabilitation settings. Eight (8) percent of DC/RSA's clients require language access services. DC/RSA works in collaboration with the network of Latino community organizations. A bilingual counselor is assigned to Bell Multicultural High School and Cardoza High School to provide on-site services to Latino and other multicultural special education students transitioning from school-to-work.

Cultural competency training is provided to the staff of CSD and the job placement unit. The training, “Break down the Language Barrier: translating limited English proficiency into practice – Title IV of the Civil Rights Act”, was conducted, and will be repeated by the Deputy Regional Manager of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights.

During the current fiscal year, DC/RSA held two (2) Career Expos with participation from clients and area employers. Plans are underway to host at least two (2) in Fiscal Year 2007. Positive results from the Administration’s sponsorship are:

- DC/RSA staff had the opportunity to further orient employers to the mission of the Administration and overall profile of individuals served.
- DC/RSA staff and placement specialists were able to further develop a positive relationship with employers;
- Clients had the opportunity to develop their interview skills;
- Employers who agreed to participate in the Expo submitted their job openings and job descriptions prior to the job fair which allowed staff to direct clients to specific employers; and
- Fifty clients were hired;

DC/RSA continues to use practices that were developed and initiated for the United States Department of Labor, Work Investment Grant III:

- Developed to improve the One-Stop Delivery System for job seekers with disabilities have broadened the One-Stop staff knowledge of people with disabilities;
- Improved the seamless service delivery system;
- Strengthened inter-agency partnerships;
- Assisted the staff in career centers to better serve job seekers with disabilities and increased the number of persons utilizing the One-Stop Center; and
- Promoted systems change by increasing awareness and sensitivity of policy makers.

Over the past fifty (50) years, the Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program (RSVFP) has been operated by a series of contractors known as Nominee Agencies. In 2004, the District opted to bring all aspects of the program in-house, introducing new partnerships with District Government agencies that were unfamiliar with the Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program. The primary reason for electing to bring the program in-house was to expeditiously initiate quality of service improvements, and critical infrastructure reengineering.

For the first time in the history of the District of Columbia government, the program has requested and received budget authority in FY2007. This request was made in order for the State Licensing Agency (SLA) to have the appropriate authority to spend the revenue generated by the program, including set aside funds for management services, and vending commission income paid directly or indirectly to the blind managers participating in the program.

The District's program has achieved approximately 75% of its necessary reengineering and can now analyze pure statistical data to manage and programmatically plan. There are currently 42 facilities operating in federal buildings within the District of Columbia. There are currently 30 licensed vendors in the program, with two (2) of those vendors being licensed in the past year. In the past five (5) years, the program has experienced a mass exodus of blind managers aging out of the program. In the past three (3) years alone, there have been 11 retirees from the RSVFP. The program's response has been to become more involved in the orientation process of all perspective's seeking vocational rehabilitation services. This effort has resulted in the development of a pipeline of potential blind managers.

Critical Reengineering

District Government Relationships

In an effort to create functionality in a bureaucratic system, the program staff sought to identify key people in each of the critical District government agencies and offices to ensure that there was someone who was familiar and could champion the program's purpose. The result of this effort was the formulation of multiple working relationships within the city government that support essential programmatic operations.

The State Licensing Agency (SLA) intends to continue building working relationships with other District agencies and offices while concurrently building the capacity of the program to deliver a quality learning and rehabilitative opportunity to persons who are blind.

Active Participation

The SLA has successfully and systematically engaged the blind managers in positions of leadership through a working committee structure. This structure works simply because the managers are held accountable by each other. The committees report on their monthly achievements and progress at both the Blind Vendor's Committee meetings, as well as the manager's at-large meetings. There are currently eight (8) working committees:

1. The Blind Vendor's Committee
2. The Pension Committee
3. The Promotion and Transfer Committee
4. The Grievance Committee
5. The Training Committee
6. The Facilities Committee
7. The Public Relations Committee
8. The Finance Committee

The SLA intends to continue relying on the working committee structure to build the capacity of the blind managers to lead and facilitate processes that lead to personal and professional independence.

Procurement

One of the most difficult challenges facing the SLA in its transition was the ability of the program to purchase and acquire services using the set-aside funding generated by the program. Based on the congressional control of the District's budget, the Rehabilitation Services Administration had to meticulously time and justify its request for additional budget authority.

In the 2005/2006 fiscal budget year, the SLA received conditional budget authority. In the 2006/2007 budget year, the SLA received official and permanent budget authority for the program. This accomplishment has provided the program with the ability to purchase, through the District's procurement system, all essential services and equipment necessary for the daily functions of the program.

Operational Policies and Procedures

Due to the magnitude of the programmatic changes in the past three (3) years, the SLA and the Blind Vendor's Committee (BVC) have worked within a special sub-committee to formulate a final draft of newly revised operational policies and procedures for the entire program. The draft is currently going through the process of legal sufficiency and upper management approval prior to the SLA requesting Federal approval.

The next step after Federal approval is to modify the local legislation to ensure that all references to a Nominee agency are deleted and replaced with the current operational structure. The SLA intends to consistently monitor the governing instruments used to compel compliance by all mandated partners of the Randolph Sheppard Act.

Reporting

Each month, the blind managers are required to submit an auditable report identifying exactly what the sales, expenditures, and taxes are for the month at each facility. This entire process has been systematically redesigned to include new report formats that were designed in conjunction with the BVC and the Finance Committee. This report generates a profit and loss statement that is produced by the State Licensing Agency as the official financial closing document for the month.

The intention of the SLA is to further streamline the reporting process by electronically networking each cash register at each facility. Each night at a prescribed hour, a network server will dial into each cash register at each location and retrieve the daily activity of the register. This information will be stored onto a file that will later be accessed for the purpose of generating a monthly profit and loss statement that can be sent to the blind managers electronically.

This planned reengineering will further streamline the reporting process and minimize the blind manager's dependence on paper reports and sighted assistants to complete and verify the accuracy of the reports.

Training

One of the more consistent complaints identified by the blind managers was the fact that the SLA has not always provided management training for blind managers entering the program and/or attempting to sustain successful business operations. The SLA has now established a partnership with Howard University and the Small Business Administration to provide a ten (10) week training course for blind managers and their senior sighted managers.

The SLA and the BVC have also established a training facility that will serve as the facility where new vendors and new sighted staff will receive hands-on practical training on the equipment and processes widely used in the Randolph Sheppard Program.

The SLA has also established an annual training schedule for in-service training that is held on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings for the benefit of assisting the blind managers and their sighted staff in keeping their knowledge, skills and abilities up-to-date.

The SLA and the BVC have also developed a Training Tier System (TSP) that will assist in leveling the playing field for younger blind managers who may not have seniority but may have consistently educated themselves in a short period of time. The system provides additional points to blind managers who attend in-service training and credentialed educational opportunities. The accumulation of points can propel a blind manager into a silver, gold or platinum level that allows them to compete for more lucrative facilities through the Promotion and Transfer System.